

# The Kinship Connection

For grandparents raising grandchildren

*I'll give you something  
to cry about!*

And other **USELESS** things we say to our  
Grandchildren:

**When I was a child...** When we were children there  
weren't even cell phones. Be relevant.

**Just like your mother/father...** Don't put other family  
members down!

**Don't tell your grandfather/mother...** Not only do you  
sound wimpy, but you're teaching your grandchild how  
to lie.

**Because I said so—that's why...** Explain the  
consequences so your grandchild learns for next time.

**Okay, but just this once...** Yeah right! They'll whine for  
ice cream every time now. Children need consistency.

**Grow up, will you!**...They are trying. Teach them how.

**If Joey jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge...** Don't  
underestimate peer pressure. Teach independent  
thinking instead.

**Don't be stupid...** Easy! Put downs REALLY hurt self-  
image and set a terrible example.

**I'll give you something to cry about...** Threatening  
violence is wrong. Explore why your grandchild is  
crying and help him/her calm down. You both may  
need time to cool off.

Dear Grandparents:

If you glean one idea from this issue about  
discipline, it's be consistent. If a child  
KNOWS he/she can whine, plead or threaten  
their way to a treat, they'll do it every time.  
On the other hand, if your rules change all the  
time, children get confused, frustrated and are  
guaranteed to misbehave.

Also, remember that DISCIPLINE doesn't  
mean PUNISHMENT. It means teaching  
respect and self-control. Sure, there can, and  
should be, unpleasant consequences for bad  
behavior, but the consequences should be  
about teaching the right behavior, not about  
misery, pain or yelling.

We hope this issue will help you find new and  
positive ways to raise your grandchildren!



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## Why They **MISBEHAVE**

Understand why your child misbehaves and you can choose the best way to respond. The three main reasons children misbehave are:

- They don't know the rules.
- They know the rules, but break them anyway. They might be angry, need attention or just can't control their desires.
- They don't feel well. Younger children often can't express their needs.

## Rules for Setting Rules

- Limit rules to important matters such as safety, homework and respect for others.
- Explain the rules. Set expectations and consequences in advance.
- Make rules to fit their ages.
- Be consistent! Respond EVERY TIME a rule is broken.
- Be firm but fair. Try not to overreact when a rule is broken.
- Give praise and attention. Let them know when they have followed rules without being told. Hugs, smiles, and high fives are perfect.

## TANTRUMS HAPPEN

Here's how to deal with tantrums:

**Safety 1st.** Make sure your grandchild is safe. Move the child or furniture if necessary.

**Stand firm.** Don't give in to the demand. Consistency is the key.

**Keep Cool.** Stay calm. Your grandchild is looking for a reaction from you. Make it a good reaction.

**Preschoolers.** Stay within the child's sight. Continue your activities without talking to him/her. You may need to hold the child to help calm him/her down.

**Older children.** Require the child to go to his/her room to calm down. Do not lecture, argue, or threaten. Demonstrate YOUR self-control.

**Hang tough.** After the tantrum, try to start your grandchild off with a clean slate WITHOUT giving in to the original demand.

**Supermarket tantrums.** Public tantrums are unnerving. Leave the store or tough it out in the aisles, but *don't give into the child's demand!*

**Prevent them.** Learn what sets your grandchild off and avoid the situations if possible.

## Before you go out...

- Whether it's to the park, mall, or snooty Aunt Tilly's who has a houseful of fragile keepsakes, PREPARE your grandchildren with what they should expect and how they are expected to behave.
- Tell them where they are going, why, and about how long they'll be there.
- Bring whatever is needed to keep them safe and comfortable (snacks, toys, etc.)
- Give fair warning about things they might not like (trying on clothes, eating strange food or playing with a weird cousin).



**We spend the first twelve months of our children's lives teaching them to walk and talk and the next twelve telling them to sit down and shut up.**

*Phyllis Diller*



## Grandparent's Tool Box

Good tools for fixing poor behavior

### Younger Children

**Re-direct**—Turn negatives to positives. Underfoot during yard work? Get a plastic rake to help. Scribbling on the table? Get the coloring book.

**Suspend privileges**—Fighting over the TV? Turn it off for an hour. Keep it short. (No TV for 2 weeks might make YOU nuts!)

**Time outs**—Sit him/her in a boring place. Use a timer. Explain what he/she did wrong and what should have been done. Keep it to 1 minute per year of age. Start at age 2.

### Older Children

**Restitution**—Broke it? Fix it. Big mess? Clean it up. Rude? Apologize. Foul mouth? Put a coin in the jar (grandparents too) and then spend it on a family outing when the jar is full.

**Work Detail**—Break the rule, wash the car.

**Grounding**—Short periods at home make the point. All summer is cruel and unusual for everyone.

### Most Ages

**When...Then**—**WHEN** you pick up your toys, **THEN** you may have a freeze pop. **WHEN** you finish your homework, **THEN** you can use the computer.

**Logical consequences**—No yelling here. Crayon on the wall—wash it off (with help). Home late tonight? In early tomorrow night.

## We do NOT recommend spanking

**And we're just fine with it.**

*Not spanking is good science.* Study after study shows that, while physical punishment may stop a behavior only for that moment, it doesn't equip a child to behave next time. Hitting also teaches children that violence solves problems. It can also lead to injury. Remember, **shaking can kill** a baby.

### Unnecessary Roughness!

Some folks have problems with anger or violence. Be aware that if you were hit or abused as a child, you are more likely to hit or abuse your grandchild. **Get help if you need it! If you have problems with anger or violence, or worry about hurting someone, call Parents Anonymous for CONFIDENTIAL HELP 24 hours a day at 800-843-5437.**

# Raising grandchildren: Take care of yourself

You probably weren't expecting to be raising kids again at this stage in your life. At times, the physical, emotional, and financial demands may feel overwhelming. That's why it's vitally important that you take care of yourself and get the support you need. When you're preoccupied with the daily demands of raising grandkids, it's easy to let your own needs fall by the wayside. But taking care of yourself is a necessity, not a luxury. You can't be a good caretaker when you're overwhelmed, exhausted, and emotionally depleted. In order to keep up with your grandkids, you need to be calm, centered, and focused. Looking after your own mental and physical health is how you get there.

**A healthy you means healthy grandchildren.** If you don't take care of your health, you won't be able to take care of your grandchildren, either. Make it a priority to eat nutritious meals, exercise regularly, and get adequate sleep. Don't let doctor's appointments or medication refills slide.

**Hobbies and relaxation are not luxuries.** Carving out time for rest and relaxation is essential to avoid burnout and depression. Use your "me" time to really nurture yourself. Choose activities that indulge your senses. Zoning out in front of the TV won't revive you.

## Support makes all the difference

Studies show that grandparents who cope well with the added stress of raising grandchildren are those who seek out others for support.

- **Find someone you can talk to about what you're going through.**
- **Look for support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren.**
- **Reach out in your community for childcare help.**
- **Connect with parents with children.**

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***The Kinship Connection** is published four times a year for grandparents raising grandchildren. The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group and all of Rutgers Cooperative Extension's educational programs are offered without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.*

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